

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers February 4, 2004

New Michigan NETS Website

The Michigan Network of Employers for Traffic Safety has a new website that's been completely redesigned and is available to all employers in the state. Please share this website with your partners so all businesses and organizations in Michigan can take advantage of our resources. The site also contains a link, ([membership questionnaire](#)) that new members can complete and return in order to be placed in our database. Please bookmark Michigan NETS **new website address**:

www.michigan.gov/michnets

Michigan State Police- Traffic related Frequently Asked Questions

Did you know that the Michigan State Police have a website that answer traffic related frequently asked questions? The site contains appropriate laws and subjects dealing with tinted windows, equipment and lighting, cellular phones, speed, motorcycles, safety belts and child restraints and mopeds/mopeds/electric vehicles.

http://michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1586_27094-73839--,00.html

Tips for Driving on Black Ice

Black ice occurs when snow or heavy rain is followed first by warm temperatures and then very cold weather. The road is visible beneath the clear, shiny surface which makes black ice difficult to detect and very dangerous to drive on. Understanding the conditions that create it and knowing how to drive on it can be critical. Joel Burrows, the Car Doctor of Precision Tune Auto Care, the nation's leading franchiser of auto care centers advises, "If you hit a patch of black ice the best course of action is no action. Do not brake, accelerate, de-accelerate, or even turn the steering wheel. Black ice is usually no bigger than 20 feet, so it's best to maintain your speed and direction until you pass."

[http://www.automotivedigest.com/PressReleases/Precision Tune Auto Care 01-05-04.doc](http://www.automotivedigest.com/PressReleases/Precision_Tune_Auto_Care_01-05-04.doc)

Child Passenger Safety Week is February 8-14

Child Passenger Safety Week this year is February 8-14. Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of children ages 2 to 14. This year's campaign focus is to raise awareness about the use of booster seats. Many people believe that children who have outgrown child safety seats should use seat belts. This is not true. Seat belts, which are designed for adults, won't fully restrain children in a crash. Children need a booster seat, which raises the child up so that the seat belt fits—and protects—them. Booster seats are recommended for children from age 4 and 40 pounds to at least age 8, unless the child is 4-feet-9-inches tall. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that booster seats are used by only 10 to 20 percent of the children who should be in them. **For**

posters, brochures and additional information for your employees, visit

<http://www.buckleupamerica.org/partnership/2004/cps/index.php>.

Not All Motorists are Deactivating Airbags for Front Riding Children

Air bag switches are often misused, needlessly endangering children and depriving adults of life-saving protection, a NHTSA survey has recently found. "Air bags can be a real lifesaver if used properly but pose grave risk to small children," said Jeffrey Runge, MD, NHTSA Administrator. More than 12 million pickup trucks and a smaller number of passenger cars and cargo vans without rear seats are equipped with air bag on-off switches. Proper use of the switches requires drivers to turn the air bag off for children 12 and under but activate it when the passenger seat is occupied by an adult.

For more information, visit the NHTSA website at

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr02-04.html>.

Crashes in Inclement Weather Has Increased

U.K. drivers are three times more likely to have an accident in wet or snowy conditions than they were five years ago – a trend that can push up the cost of fleet insurance and leave drivers with cars off the road. A new survey from insurance claims management specialist Town & Country Assistance, found that crashes in which rain, hail, sleet or snow was cited as a factor, increased from one-in-11.5 in the winter of 1998-99 to one-in-four in the first half of the current winter. The company's research comes after the 2002 Government report, "Climate Change Scenarios for the UK," which found that winters were now wetter than they have been for the past 200 years. The survey also revealed that rain-related road accidents in summer are also on the rise in Britain.

NJ Became the Second State in the Country to Ban Hand Held Cell Phones

New Jersey became the 2nd state in the country to ban drivers from using hand-held cell phones while driving. Gov. James McGreevey signed legislation Jan 20th that sets \$100 to \$250 fines for drivers caught using cell phones in traffic. New York has the only other state law restricting cell phone use by drivers. The new law limits drivers to the use of hands-free devices, but still allows drivers to dial, answer, and turn on their mobile phones. The New Jersey bill, S338 does not allow police to stop drivers for using hand-held phones. They can only be ticketed if stopped for another reason. The new law exempts emergency calls. No points will be assessed against the offender's driving record.

Continued Improvement in Highway Safety for the Nation's Trucking Industry

New statistics released by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) show continued major improvement in highway safety for the nation's trucking industry. According to the USDOT, the new fatal crash rate for large trucks is 1.9 fatal crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, an 11 percent reduction from the previous year. This puts the rate at its lowest point since the USDOT began keeping large truck safety records in 1975. **For more information, visit**

http://www.truckinginfo.com/news/news-detail.asp?news_id=51158&news_category_id=6.

Restrictions on Teenage Passengers Riding with Teenage Drivers

Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) of Americans support laws limiting the number of teenage passengers who may ride with inexperienced teen drivers, according to a nationwide poll released by AAA, yet just half of states have these lifesaving laws. Crash data show that passenger restriction laws, an important component of Graduated Driver Licensing systems (GDL), are the most effective way to reduce teen crashes, deaths and injuries. **For more information, visit the AAA website at** <http://www.aaanewsroom.net/Articles.asp?ArticleID=277&CategoryID=7&SectionID=3&>.

Bill to Force Carmakers to Provide Garages with More Information for Repairs

Major auto shops and parts suppliers are gearing up to push a bill that would force carmakers to provide independent garages with more information for repair work. Companies such as Midas, NAPA, Advance Auto Parts, AutoZone, and Jiffy Lube want Congress to pass the Motor Vehicle Owner's Right to Repair Act (H.R. 2735), which seeks to ensure that mechanics can access software codes and other diagnostic tools they need to tell what's wrong with a car or truck. The companies have banded together to form the Coalition for Auto Repair Equality (CARE). **To view the bill, visit** http://www.careauto.org/hr2735/hr2735_2003.pdf.

Passengers in Vehicles Need to Buckle Up Too

Fastening the seat belt protects motorists in a crash, but the risk of dying in a wreck rises if fellow passengers do not buckle up, researchers said. In crashes where a back seat passenger was not wearing a seat belt, the risk of death to the belted passenger in the front seat rose 20 percent, the study said. Similarly, a back seat belted passenger faced a 22 percent greater risk if the passenger in the front seat was not buckled up. Examining 12 years of U.S. crash data, the researchers from Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center in Seattle concluded that one in six deaths of front seat passengers wearing a seat belt might be prevented if the back seat passenger was also strapped in.

Warning Sign for Crashes May Be Pink

The Federal Highway Administration adopted new traffic sign standards last month, including one measure that allows warning signs of a different color to alert motorists when a crash has occurred. And, in a nod to the nation's growing fleet of older drivers, the agency has updated its rules to allow larger print on some road signs and on pavement markings. For years, emergency crews and engineers have used bright orange signs to warn drivers that lanes have been closed because of construction or major incidents. In coming years, states will have the option of using bright pink signs to warn motorists of lane closures because of a crash. Orange construction signs will not change.

Report Examines Automated Red Light Cameras

A report released by the University Transportation Center for Alabama examines the operation of automated red light camera systems, the accuracy of such systems, and their cost-effectiveness in reducing red light running and related crashes. **For more information, visit** http://utca.eng.ua.edu/projects/final_reports/00470-3rpt.pdf.

New Law in NH to Prevent Illegal Parking in Handicap Spots

A new law in New Hampshire that went into effect this month allows people with disabilities to snap pictures of cars parked illegally in handicapped spaces and submit the photos, along with a sworn statement, to the local police. The police then track down the driver and issue a ticket. Although it's long been illegal to park in designated handicapped spaces without a special license plate or permit, enforcing the law is sometimes hard. Often the illegally parked car has moved by the time the police arrive or the person with a disability has found an accessible space elsewhere. The new rule is one of three major changes to the state's handicapped parking laws passed last year. In addition to permitting the photos, fines for parking illegally in an accessible space was increased up to \$250. Also, it's now illegal to park in the buffer area between accessible spaces.

Majority of U.K. Fleets are Ignoring Basic Risk Management Processes

The vast majority of U.K. fleets are jeopardizing the lives of their drivers by ignoring even the most basic risk management processes, shocking new statistics have revealed. A staggering 85% of fleets are not covering four of the most simple risk management procedures – license checking, new driver examinations, publishing a driver handbook and investigating accidents – according to fleet insurer Norwich Union. Although fleets are doing at least one of the above, Norwich Union claims doing all four makes up the most basic of procedures. Competitor Zurich has backed up the claim after finding more than a third of fleets are doing nothing at all.

Billboards do not Measurably Affect Driving Performance

According to a report released by the Center for Crash Causation and Human Factors at Virginia Tech's Transportation Institute (VTI), billboards do not measurably affect driving performance. **For**

more information, visit

<http://www.oaaa.org/uploads/news/attachments/9B2BA9A5311543A9B7CBE8F7304BE49A.pdf>.

U.K. Cell Phone Ban Causes Safety Crisis

A ban on the use of hand-held mobile phones while driving is causing a safety crisis on Britain's roads as motorists, including fleet drivers, put their lives in danger by attempting to stop and answer calls, Fleet News, a UK fleet publication reported on January 14. Since the UK government introduced the ban late last year, growing numbers of fleets have reported drivers having near-misses with stationary cars parked in dangerous places by drivers answering calls. Fleet News reported that one driver died in a crash after another motorist stopped to answer a mobile phone.